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Extraversion and Neuroticism as Correlates of Assertive Behaviour among Nigerian Police Officers

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Abstract

This study examined neuroticism and extraversion as correlates of assertive behaviour among Nigerian Police Officers. A total of 107 participants comprising 65 male and 52 female Police Officers participated in this study. The 107 Police Officers were between the age range of 24-33 years with a mean age of 28.5 and standard deviation of 2.11. The participants were drawn from the population of Nigeria Police Officers at the Nigeria Police Headquarters, Enugu, Enugu State, using available sampling technique. Two sets of instrument were used in generating data, the “Big Five Inventory (BFI) advanced by John, Donahue and Kentle (1991) and validated for use in Nigeria by Agbo (2013), and Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) developed by Rathus (1973), but validated for use in Nigeria by Eze (2015). The researcher adopted Cross – Sectional Survey as this study’s design, while regression analysis” was applied in analyzing the data. The findings indicated a positive significant correlation between extraversion and assertive behaviour ($\beta=.24$, $N=107$, $P<.01$), while a negative correlation existed between neuroticism and assertive behaviour ($\beta=-.24$, $N=107$, $P<.01$). The researcher recommends that parents and individuals should train, develop or socialize their children to become extraverted personalities so that they always stand up for their rights to voice out their feelings in any situation in a straight forward manner without causing any injury to others.

Keywords: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Assertive behaviour and Nigerian Police Officers.

Introduction

Serious attention has been given to the concept of assertive behaviour in research literature due to its connection to healthy personality adjustments (Joshua, 2009). Training on assertive behaviour has become a desirable goal of therapy since its emergence in early 70s. This therapy is a popular intervention technique being used in schools, organizations, counseling centres, psychological services centres as well as in other mental health care centres. Research literatures in the contemporary societies propose several definitions of assertive behaviour. Assertive behaviour according to Lang (2002), has been perceived as standing for one’s personal rights and communicating thoughts, feelings and belief in a straight forward and appropriate manners without any infringement on other’s rights. Truez (2014) noted that assertive individuals are the individuals who are capable of acting in their own best interest without feeling of any form of excessive anxiety or disregard for the rights of others.

Researchers in trying to prove the complex nature of this concept identified affective component of assertiveness as the expression of assertive behaviour feedback that can be inhibited by anxiety, while cognitive component of assertiveness is lack of assertive behaviour as influenced by self-depreciation (Peters, 2014). According to Wolpe (1968) individuals with a low sense of worth may experience difficulty in standing up for themselves because they view others' thoughts, feelings and rights as more important than their own.

Bastien (2007) explained the multidimensional nature of assertiveness by describing it in terms of three response classes, such as positive assertiveness which according to him consists of the expression of positive feelings such as admiration, agreement, acceptance, affection, etc, negative assertiveness which is all about the expression of negative feelings such as regret, disagreement, rejection, anger, annoyance, while self-denial involves excessive interpersonal anxiety, over-blown worry about others' feelings, unwarranted apology, etc. These various classes of assertive behaviour seem to achieve a variety of goals and that the content of an assertive response may be positive or negative.

According to Lange (2002), people who are high in assertiveness are more self-actualized than people who are low in assertiveness because assertive behaviour leads to One's needs being respected and fulfilled. Galassi and Bastien (2007) noted that assertive people are communicative, interactive, self-assured, free-minded and spirited, and have the ability to guide and influence lives of others. George and Jonkit (2012) opined that assertive individual has the freedom through the use of words and actions to disclose him/ herself openly and directly to others, tries to make things lively, and strives to retain his or her respect whether good or bad in all situations.

Assertiveness is explained as one's ability to express his/her thoughts and feelings, defend his/her thoughts and feelings, defend his/her rights and to act in certain ways without violating the rights of others (Emmons, 2015). Lazarus (2016) explained assertiveness as a social boldness to express feelings and frankness without any infringement on the rights of people. Lazarus further pointed out that assertiveness reflects one's expression of his/her genuine feelings, standing up for his/her legitimate rights, principles, preferences and belief as well as rejecting useless demands.

Therefore, an assertive individual is one with the ability to stand firm in defense of his/her rights by expressing his/her thoughts and feelings, with strong confidence, without being passive, aggressive or reckless with his/her words to others around him or her.

However, being assertive seems to be dependent on one's personality type, which is a unique pattern of traits the person possesses. One's personality type could predispose him/her to being assertive. Pervin (1997) described personality as an individual's unique and relative consistent patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving, while a trait is relatively stable, enduring predisposition to behave in a certain way. Pervin further noted that extraversion is one of the big five personality traits that can be explained as tendency towards sociability and leadership qualities and that extraversion manifests in behaviours of the out-going, talkative and energetic individuals. An extravert enjoys being with friends, gives social assistance in social situations, outgoing, full of energy and vigour. Extraverts enjoy company of others, human interactions, gregarious, and talkatives. Extraverted individuals are likely to spend time with people and also tend to be energized any time they are in the midst of other people and they seem to be prone to boredom when they are alone. The level to which an individual is outgoing, vibrant, resonant, energetic and interactive with others is termed extraversion (Ozor, 2014). Ozor further noted that extraverted persons are excited when engaged in social activity.

Furthermore, neuroticism as a personality trait is one of the factors that could predispose one to assertive behaviour.

According to Costa and Mcrae (1985), neuroticism is the tendency to experience negative emotions such as sadness or anxiety as well as mood swings. Individuals with high scores on neuroticism are susceptible or prone to feeling of hurt, tend to worry, ruminate a lot, easily feel upset, and often show high emotional reactivity to stress. According to Slade and Issakidis (2002), neuroticism is characterized as displaying persistent states of fear, anxiety, anger, guilt and depression. Furthermore neurotic habits are automatic ritualized patterns of overt behaviour that people engage in to alleviate anxiety and provide a sense of familiar security. They further noted that neurotic people are susceptible to threats in their environments which can expose them to difficulty in relationships, mood and rumination over what could go wrong. They are more easily distracted and less self-confident. Nettle (2007) reports that people who score high on test for neuroticism tend to be strivers. They are amazingly handworking even without expectation of any external reward to prevent or avoid any intending danger. Neuroticism is a unique dimensional measure of personality thought to capture emotional stability and a temperamental sensitivity to a negative stimulus. In view of this, therefore, the researcher deemed it necessary to join other researchers on the similar

topic in the world to find out whether extraversion and neuroticism as personality traits will correlate with assertive behaviour among the Nigeria police officers.

In the past, it was observed that Nigeria Police Officers were bold, assertive and felt free to reveal themselves through words and actions, could communicate openly and directly with their colleagues and superiors, tended to make things happen and strived to retain their self-respects while all these lasted. However, in recent times, it seems many Nigeria police officers no longer exhibit assertive behaviours. That is, they hide their feelings from others. Some show little or no assertive behaviour at all when it comes to expression of feelings and actions to colleagues or superiors. Following this development, the researchers tend to find out if extraversion and neuroticism will significantly correlate with assertive behaviour among Nigeria Police Officers?

Theoretical Perspective

Five factor Theory of Personality

This theory was advanced by Goldberg in 1990, and it proposed a five dimensions of personality model which is referred to as “Big five personality trait” Extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience. Extraversion refers to the tendency to be fun-loving, talkative, sociable, affectionate, and assertive and it involves seeking stimulation in the company of others. Neuroticism is the tendency to be self-conscious, guilt prone, anxious, and also seen as the degree of emotional stability and impulse control. Only these two personality traits are the researcher’s concern in this study. This theory’s failure to provide etiological explanations for human behaviour and human personality such as masculinity/femininity, are the weaknesses of this theory.

Allport’s Trait Theory of Personality

Allport (1967) believes that people possess traits which predispose them to act in a particular way, irrespective of the situation. This shows that traits seem to remain consistent in all situations, but may differ between individuals. Following this development, it is presumed that individuals differ in their traits due to genetic differences. Allport further pointed out that some people exhibit some cardinal personality traits which are the ruling passions that dominate an individual’s life and that those cardinal traits were rare. One short-coming of this theory is that it requires personal observations or self-reports to measure, and these measures are subjective and can constitute observational bias and other forms of inaccuracies.

Eysenck Three Factor Theory of Personality

Eysenck (1975) noted that just three traits, extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism are sufficient to explain human personality, and that where a person falls on these three dimensions gives a clear picture on how to ascertain the individual's personality. For example, the dimension of neuroticism measures a person's level of stability/instability. According to Eysenck, Stable people are calm, even-tempered and reliable, while unstable persons are moody, anxious and unreliable. The dimension of psychoticism gives account of an individual's degree of toughness or tenderness. Tough minded individuals are hostile, ruthless and insensitive, whereas tender minded individuals are friendly emphatic and cooperative, while the dimension of extraversion accounts for person's degree of extroversion and introversion. Extroverted individual is associated with happiness, while introverted individual is associated with sadness. One major limitation of this theory is that the factors here are too cheap to explain personality.

Behavioural Theory of Assertiveness

Wolpe (1973) theory of assertiveness posits that one's failure to develop assertiveness is perceived to be a function of learned anxiety responses. Galassi and Galassi (1977) pointed out that the principles of operant conditioning and reciprocal inhibition, suggest that non-assertive behaviour results primarily from the punishment of assertive behaviour and the concomitant conditioning of anxiety responses to assertive cues.

Furthermore, this position implicitly assumes that non-assertive behaviour represents an avoidance reaction due to anxiety felt in situations that need assertive behaviour and that non-assertive behaviour may be as a result of one's lack of assertiveness training skills or a failure to distinguish appropriate information regarding what constitutes an appropriate response (Donald, 2016)

Social Learning Theory of Assertiveness

This theory advanced by Bandura (1978) stipulates that assertiveness or non-assertiveness is acquired through the observation of models instead of direct conditioning of anxiety. Consequently, inhibition of assertive behaviour is as a result of observed punishment of the model's assertiveness, whereas expression of assertiveness as opposed to direct anxiety reduction techniques relies primarily on the result from observed rewards of the model's behaviour (Rich & Sgroeder, 1999).

This theory also pointed out that an individual who fails to learn and exhibit assertiveness may have experienced limited exposure to assertive behaviour model (Richard, 2002). In other words, assertiveness is learned through observation of positively reinforced assertive behaviour of role models in social setting. Through the process of socialization experiences, assertive behaviour is planted in an individual. However, this lacks merit for failing to take into consideration what one person perceives as punishment and the other views as reward.

Different researches have shown some supports or agreements with the proposition of differences in personality characteristics between assertive and nonassertive persons. For example, Lampard (2015) examined relationship between personality traits and assertive behaviour among middle adults and the outcome of the study revealed significant positive relationship between neuroticism and assertive behaviour. Furthermore, the same study revealed a significant positive relationship between extraversion and assertiveness among middle adults.

Justus (2017) recent study investigated the relationship between personality factors and assertiveness using college undergraduate students of Ontario, and found no significant relationship between neuroticism and assertiveness among the students. However, the same study showed a significant relationship between extraversion and assertiveness among the students.

Tosh (2013) study found a significant positive correlation between level of self-concept and assertive behaviour among senior secondary school students. The result of the same study also found a negative correlation between assertiveness and fear of negative evaluative situations. Failure to assert one-self as proposed is unconnected with certain affective personality variables such as social situational anxiety (Jonah & Hans, 2014). Their correlation study revealed that assertive behaviour is inversely related to interpersonal anxiety, pointing out that a person with high social situational anxiety may fail to assert him/herself in social situations due to fear of use of wrong grammatical expressions or saying the wrong thing at the right time and vice versa.

In organizational relations, such as in the military and paramilitary organizations, employees with assertive behaviour tend to be seen by both the employers and fellow employees as more powerful than the passive employees and tend to adopt more perfect and beneficial position in social connections or links (Jonah & Hans, 2014). They further reported that people who are positively assertive, showcase full and free expression of emotions and optimistically take

steps towards particular goal and find peace and joy in most daily life, while a non-assertive person demonstrates neutral behaviours, shows high level of anxiety and may not be able to create logical goals for which to forge ahead. Among the theories reviewed in this study Trait Theory of personality by Allport has been adopted as the theoretical framework of this study because it is the only theory in this study that connects all the study variables.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study

1. Extraversion will not significantly correlate with assertive behaviour
2. Neuroticism will not significantly correlate with assertive behaviour

Method

Participants

A total of 107 (One Hundred and Seven) Police Officers comprising 65 Male and 52 female Police Officer participated in the study. They were between the age range of 24 and 33 years with the mean age of 28.5 and standard deviation of 2.11. The participants were drawn from the population of Police Officers at the Enugu Police Headquarters, Enugu using accidental sampling technique. Secondary school certificate education (SSEC) was the least educational qualification, while Masters Degree was the highest educational qualification of the participants. The participants shared their origins from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and were Christians and Muslims.

Instruments

The participants were administered with two sets of instrument during the study, namely- big five inventory by John, Donahue and Kentle (1991) validated for use in Nigeria by Agbo (2013), and the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) by Rathus (1973), Validated for use in Nigeria by Eze (2015). The big five inventory (BFI) advanced by John, Donahue and Kentle (1991) is one of the psychological assessment instruments. They reported a Cronbach Alpha reliability of .75 and .65 after test retest. Agbo (2013) in his validation of this instrument obtained a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .73 for extraversion and .78 for neuroticism. It is an inventory that assesses personality traits including extraversion and neuroticism using 8-items for each dimension. It has five points Likert response format: strongly disagree-1, disagree a

little-2, neither agree or disagree -3, Agree a little- 4, and agree strongly – 5. All the items are scored directly. Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) is also a standardized psychological assessment instrument advanced by Rathus (1973), but validated for use in Nigeria by Eze (2015). This is a 30- item inventory designed to assess assertive behaviour. The RAS requires participants to explain themselves using: very much like me-3, rather like me-2, slightly like me-1

Procedure

A total of 120 copies of the questionnaires were administered to the participants in their various offices and also, those seen within the compound of the Nigeria Police Headquarters, Enugu, Enugu State. Only those Police Officers who were present at the time of this study and agreed to fill the questionnaires participated in this study. Out of the 120 copies of the questionnaires administered, 110 copies were recovered; only 3 copies were wrongly filled and discarded while only 107 copies that were correctly filled were used for the data analysis.

Design and Statistics

This study's design was Cross-Sectional, because it involved different people from different groups that were compared on a particular variable at the same time. Regression analysis was the statistics used to analyze the data generated, to establish the extent of correlation between the variables.

Results

Table: Table of Mean and Standard Deviation (Sd) Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	SD	N
Age	28.5	2.11	107
Rathus Schedule	13.68	22.09	107
Extraversion	27.38	4.18	107
Neuroticism	25.50	5.15	107

The table of the means and standard deviation showed the mean age of 28.5 and SD = 2.11. It showed also the Rathus schedule means score ($\bar{x} = 13.68$, SD = 22.09). Furthermore the extraversion mean score ($\bar{x} = 27.38$, SD = 4.18) and that of mean score for neuroticism ($\bar{x} = 25.50$, SD = 5.15). The table also shows the number of participants.

Table II: Summary table showing extraversion and neuroticism as correlates of assertiveness

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender	1				
2. Age	.24**	1			
3. Assertiveness	.27**	.01	1		
4. Extraversion	-.05	.05	.24**	1	
5. Neuroticism	-.01	-.04	-.24**	.32**	1

The above table II shows regression analysis to determine the correlation between assertive behaviour and extraversion as well as neuroticism.

The table showed a moderate correlation between assertive behaviour and extraversion which was statistically significant. In other words, the result showed a significant correlation between extraversion and assertive behaviour. That is, as the scores in extraversion increase, the scores for assertive behaviour also increase and vice versa. The hypothesis which states that there will be no significant correlation between assertive behaviour and extraversion is hereby rejected. However, there was a moderate negative correlation between assertive behaviour and neuroticism. This is because as the scores for neuroticism go up, the scores for assertive behaviour go down, and vice versa. The lower the scores in neuroticism the higher the scores in assertive behaviour and vice versa. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there will be no significant correlation between neuroticism and assertive behaviour is hereby rejected.

Discussion

This study focused in extraversion and neuroticism as correlates of assertive behaviour. One of the results of the study indicated a moderate correlation between extraversion and assertive behaviour among the Nigeria Police Officers. That is, as the scores on extraversion increased, the scores on assertive behaviour also increased and vice versa. Also, a moderate negative correlation existed between neuroticism and assertive behaviour. That is, as the scores on neuroticism increased, the scores on assertive behaviour decreased and vice versa. As a result of this development, the null hypotheses of the study were all rejected.

The first result above is in agreement with the study of Lampard (2015) that examined relationship between personality traits and assertive behaviour among middle adults. The outcome of the study revealed a significant positive relationship between extraversion and

assertiveness and also a moderate negative correlation between neuroticism and assertive behaviour.

Furthermore, Justus (2017) study investigated the relationship between personality factors and assertiveness using college undergraduate students of Otario, and found a significant correlation between extraversion and assertiveness among the students. However, the same study found no significant relationship between neuroticism and assertiveness among the students. The study further explained that students with high levels of assertive behaviour were significantly more extraverted (but less neurotic) than students with low levels of assertive behaviour. The no significant relationship between neuroticism and assertive behaviour as reported in Justus (2017) study, did not agree with the result of this study. This could be attributed to differences in educational levels and environmental stimulations on the side of the participants. By implication, this study is pointing out that a high level of assertive behaviour moves hand-in-hand with high level of extraversion because the extraverts tend to look out environmental stimulations from the external surroundings and as a result, like making their feelings known to others, unlike the non-external individuals who prefer less social environmental stimulations, and therefore, tend to avoid any occasion that may bring over environmental stimulations caused by either conflicts, squabbles or disagreements. However, due to the fact that neurotic individuals experience more negative emotions, social anxiety, and are more susceptible to environmental stress, they may be prevented from exhibiting assertive behaviours or responses. One's inability to express his/her feelings to others may bring about lack of positive interpersonal relationships in the environment and this is capable of leading to abnormal behavior which results from ones negative feeling of oneself.

Implications of the findings

This study can be implicated following its findings that assertive behaviour could be determined by personality trait known as extraversion. That is, the higher the extraversion trait, the higher the ability to demonstrate assertive behaviour which plays the role as a moderator against neurotic tendencies such as having regular mood fluctuations.

This study also showed that the higher the degree of neurotic trait, the less the degree of assertive behaviour of a person following the obstructed tendency to express one's feeling which leads to negative interpersonal relationship and social anxiety which will in turn lead

to abnormal behaviour resulting from the negative feeling of oneself. By the discovery of this new knowledge, social psychology literature is said to have been enriched.

Summary/Conclusion

A moderate positive correlation exists between assertive behaviour and extraversion among the Nigeria Police Officers. This is because as the scores on assertive behaviour increased, the scores on extraversion also increased and vice versa. Furthermore, a moderate negative correlation exists between assertive behaviour and neuroticism among the Nigeria Police Officers. This is because, as the scores on assertive behaviour increased, the scores on neuroticism decreased and vice versa.

In conclusion, individuals should be socialized or trained during their early childhood development to inculcate in the individuals personality trait known as extraversion. This will help to harmonize or build the individual's psychological well-being that will ensure good positive interpersonal relationships with others in the environment.

Future researchers should look at other personality dimensions to determine the extent of their relationships with assertive behaviour. This will help to discover persons with such personality traits that experience problems of making their feelings known to others so that their problems can be handled using psychological approaches to ensure good harmonious co-existence among people.

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